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C O N F I D E N T I A L SARAJEVO 001982

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DEPT FOR EUR (DICARLO), D (SMITH), P (BAME), EUR/SCE  
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TAGS: [MARR](#) [OPDC](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [BK](#)  
SUBJECT: BOSNIAN PRESS "BREAKS" STORY OF EAGLE BASE CLOSURE

REF: A) STATE 84064 B) SARAJEVO 1275

Classified By: A/DCM D. Sarro for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (SBU) On August 30, nearly one month after the BiH Council of Ministers publicly announced the U.S. decision to vacate Eagle Base in Tuzla, the daily newspaper Oslobodjenje ran an "exclusive" front page story under the headline "American Army to Leave Bosnia by the End of the Year." Despite the misleading headline, the Oslobodjenje article was straightforward and generally factual in tone. It accurately reported that Task Force Strike would soon leave Eagle Base but a smaller force would remain as part of the larger NATO mission.

[¶2.](#) (C) Although the Ambassador informed Tri-Presidency Chairman Sulejman Tihic of the drawdown in May (ref B) Tihic is quoted in the story as stating he received no official notification from "diplomatic or political sources" of the closure, asserting he only became aware of the plans to close the base from civil aviation officials in Tuzla.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Oslobodjenje accurately incorporated Embassy press guidance, previously coordinated with the Department, in the story. The article highlighted that Bosnia's substantial progress in defense reform and its establishment of a single, professional armed forces contributed to the USG decision. It added that the U.S. would increase its military-to-military cooperation with Bosnia, and supports Bosnia's future membership in the Partnership for Peace.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) The paper alleged the existence of a "silent diplomatic campaign" by senior Bosnian officials seeking to preserve a reduced U.S. force presence in Bosnia and claimed that senior political leaders were determined to seek additional security guarantees from the USG as a result of the drawdown.

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